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## Have Mercy

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# Have Mercy

by John Van Rys

A quiet place  
to work—that's all  
I was looking for, finding it  
in the chapel basement—  
strange place for a stranger.

You intruded, trespassed  
my privacy  
before clicking it shut—  
the prayer room door.

o bother  
said the Pooh in me, the stuffy  
belly dense with self-  
fluff, puffed and expansive.  
The dense self is stillness  
where atoms vibrate least, settled.

*O Lord, have mercy on me*  
not whispered nor whined nor chanted  
with heart absent—all there you sang,  
repeated, your voice an offering,  
clean flesh on a scorching fire.

*O Lord, have mercy on me*  
your voice was human  
in each cord—not lark-like  
nor operatic, bound by  
comparison, just  
clear, patient, again  
and again

*O Lord, have mercy on me*  
your voice was pain  
and pained me dully, eavesdropper  
on your faith  
on the straining quality  
of mercy—mercy  
I neither seek nor give, fixed  
in the packed snow  
of my dreaming, drowsing,  
doped up soul—breath  
shallow, barely deeper than my lips.

please open the door  
*O Lord, have mercy on me.*